

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

DRAWER 4A

RELIGIOUS CONTACTS


71.2009.085.03041

Abraham Lincoln and Religion

Christian Science

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<http://archive.org/details/abrahx00linc>

ISSN 0377-5321

SINO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

AN INTERNATIONAL QUARTERLY



SPRING, 1996

THE CHINA ACADEMY

VOL. XXII, NO.1

\$7.00 A COPY

PROCEEDINGS OF THE LINCOLN SOCIETY:

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE AND ABRAHAM LINCOLN

By Robert G. Lawrence

Wherever there is true greatness one finds agreement! Although the discovery of Christian Science in 1866 and Lincoln's freeing of the slaves in 1863 were contemporary, Abraham Lincoln was not a member of the Christian Science church.

However, this church as well as the nation in which both flourished, and continue to flourish, have a profound debt to Lincoln. Mary Baker Eddy, the Discoverer of this religion, writes in her main work regarding Lincoln's "Emancipation Proclamation":

Appearing under the marginal headings, "Slavery abolished", "Immortal sentence", and "Liberty's crusade", she says, "The history of our country, like all history, illustrates the might of Mind, and shows human power to be proportionate to its embodiment of right thinking. A few immortal sentences, breathing the omnipotence of divine justice, have been potent to break despotic fetters and abolish the whipping-post and slave market; but oppression neither went down in blood, nor did the breath of freedom come from the cannon's mouth. Love is the liberator.

"Legally to abolish unpaid servitude in the United States was hard; but the abolition of mental slavery is a more difficult task. The despotic tendencies, inherent in mortal mind and always germinating in new forms of tyranny, must be rooted out through the action of the divine Mind.

"Men and women of all climes and races are still in bondage to material sense, ignorant how to obtain their freedom. The rights of man were vindicated in a single section and on the lowest plane of human life, when African slavery was abolished in our land. That was only prophetic of further steps towards the banishment of a world-wide slavery, found on higher planes of existence and under more subtle and depraving forms.

"The voice of God in behalf of the African slave was still echoing in our land, when the voice of the herald of this new crusade sounded the keynote of universal freedom, asking a fuller acknowledgment of the rights of man as a Son of God, demanding that the fetters of sin, sickness, and death be stricken from the human mind and that its freedom be won, not through human warfare, not with bayonet and blood, but through Christ's divine Science.

"God has built a higher platform of human rights, and He has built it on diviner claims. These claims are not made through code or creed, but in demonstration of 'on earth peace, good-will toward men.' Human codes, scholastic theology, material medicine and hygiene, fetter faith and spiritual understanding. Divine Science rends asunder these fetters, and man's birthright of sole allegiance to his Maker asserts itself."*

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that both of these individuals squarely based their lives on the ethic of God's emancipation which Christ Jesus lived to establish for all time.

President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation provided an essential example from which Mrs. Eddy must have drawn much courage and inspiration in her life-work of emancipating mankind

* *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, 225:23-21 n.p.)

from all chains, – even such slavish tyrants as sin, disease and death.

In reverent tribute to Lincoln, Mrs. Eddy wrote the following:

TO THE OLD YEAR – 1865.

Pass on, returnless year!
 The track behind thee is with glory crowned;
 The turf where thou hast trod is holy ground.
 Pass proudly to thy bier!

Chill was thy midnight day,
 While Justice grasped the sword to hold her throne,
 And on her altar our loved Lincoln's own
 Great willing heart did lay.

Thy purpose hath been won!
 Thou point'st thy phantom finger, grim and cold,
 To the dark record of our guilt unrolled,
 And smiling, say'st, "Tis done!"

"This record I will bear
 To the dim chambers of eternity –
 The chain and charter I have lived to see
 Purged by the cannon's prayer;

Convulsion, carnage, war;
 The pomp and tinsel of unrighteous power;
 Bloated oppression in its awful hour, –
 I, dying, dare abhor!"

One word, receding year,
 Ere thou grow tremulous with shadowy night!
 Say, will the young year dawn with wisdom's light
 To brighten o'er thy bier?

Or we the past forget,

And heal her wounds too tenderly to last?

Or let today grow difficult and vast

With traitors unvoiced yet?

Though thou must leave the tear, —

Hearts bleeding ere they break in silence yet,

Wrong jubilant and right with bright eye wet, —

Thou fast expiring year,

Thy work is done, and well:

Thou hast borne burdens, and may take thy rest,

Pillow thy head on time's untired breast.

Illustrious year, farewell!

Lynn, Mass., *January* 1, 1866.



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1995, first edition

6.1×9.5", 292pp.

Hardbound US \$ 24.95

(postage extra)

Collated and edited

by

The Lincoln Society, Taipei

—Please send your orders to:

Chinese Culture University Press

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LAND OF THE FREE – A U.S. Citizen's Perspective*

By Michael Shannon

Recently I was reading a biography of Abraham Lincoln. As I read and thought about this man and his times, I began to see a historical correlation between Lincoln's presidency and the discovery of Christian Science.

Lincoln's inauguration in 1861 coincided with what was regarded as a rebellion by the southern states, which seceded from the Union and formed their own confederation. Initially Lincoln's main purpose was to save the Union. Slavery was a secondary issue because he believed that if he could restrict slavery to the southern states, it would eventually die out. As the war dragged on, however, he was impelled to address the root cause of the conflict and consequently issued the Emancipation Proclamation, effectively freeing the slaves in the rebellious states.

A deeply principled man, Lincoln often turned to the Bible for guidance. In a letter to Eliza. P. Gurney in the fall of 1864 he wrote, "The purposes of the Almighty are perfect, and must prevail, though we erring mortals may fail to accurately perceive them in advance. . . . We must work earnestly in the best light He gives us, trusting that so working still conduces to the great ends He ordains. Surely He intends some great good to follow that mighty convulsion, which no mortal could make, and no mortal

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could stay.”¹

Although an assassin’s bullet prevented Lincoln from seeing his prophecy fulfilled, it seems no coincidence that one year after the surrender of Gen. Robert E. Lee at Appomattox in 1865, a different form of slavery – one that binds man to sickness, sin, and death – was uncovered. It was declared divinely unconstitutional and proved to be so by a woman from New Hampshire named Mary Baker Eddy.

Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, freeing the African slave, and Mary Baker Eddy’s discovery of Christian Science, freeing people from the slavery of erroneous material beliefs, were both based on a spiritual foundation. For Lincoln, it was enshrined in the concept articulated at Gettysburg “that all men are created equal.” In this address Lincoln was saying, in effect, this is what we are fighting for.

Man’s divine rights were certainly at the heart of Mrs. Eddy’s words when she wrote in *Science and Health*: “Like our nation, Christian Science has its Declaration of Independence. God has endowed man with inalienable rights, among which are self-government, reason, and conscience. Man is properly self-governed only when he is guided rightly and governed by his Maker, divine Truth and Love” (p. 106). In this regard it is interesting to note that the war didn’t end until Lincoln initiated an amendment to the Constitution outlawing slavery throughout the land.

Science and Health says: “...oppression neither went down in blood, nor did the breath of freedom come from the cannon’s mouth. Love is the liberator” (p. 225). Certainly Lincoln recognized this truth when he said at the end of his second inaugural address, “With malice toward none; with charity for all;

with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; . . . to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations."²

To me, the discovery of Christian Science was no accident of history, but evidence that God was working His purpose out. Just as He is doing now in my life, whatever my individual struggle, whatever sense of division might be trying to rob me of my peace. I know that if I stay the course, adhere to God, divine Principle, and understand and claim my rights, victory over injustice is assured.

Science and Health declares, "The voice of God in behalf of the African slave was still echoing in our land, when the voice of the herald of this new crusade sounded the keynote of universal freedom, asking a fuller acknowledgment of the rights of man as a Son of God, demanding that the fetters of sin, sickness, and death be stricken from the human mind and that its freedom be won, not through human warfare, not with bayonet and blood, but through Christ's divine Science" (p.226).

Notes

1. David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), pp.514-515.
2. *Ibid.*, pp.567-568.

Speakers

Christian Science Monitor
BOSTON, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6, 1935

Christian Science to the World



Parlor into which the discoverer
& founder of Christian Science
looked after her sudden re-
covery from a serious injury.

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DRAWER 4A

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